

April 24, 2013

To: House Education Committee members

From: Delaney McKinley, MMA director of human resource policy

RE: SUPPORT HB 4465 and HB 4466

On behalf of the over 2,400 members of the Michigan Manufacturers Association (MMA) that operate in the full spectrum of manufacturing industries, ranging from small manufacturers to some of the world's largest corporations I am here to support HB 4465 and HB 4466 which will improve the flexibility of the Michigan Merit Curriculum (MMC) to allow students more opportunities to explore career and vocational training education options.

Manufacturing is the largest sector of our economy, directly employing over 500,000 Michigan residents. We believe that this legislation will help more students achieve a high school diploma that is applicable and relevant to the jobs and careers of the 21st Century.

Manufacturing remains the driving force behind Michigan's economic recovery and in order for that to continue it is essential that we fill the state's 7,000 manufacturing job vacancies. Michigan has seen tremendous growth in manufacturing jobs. The sector saw 11 percent job growth between 2009 and 2011, a rate nearly four times higher than that of overall job growth. This trend is expected to continue due to production increases in the manufacturing industry and the aging of the current workforce. Comprehensive data regarding Michigan's manufacturing sector can be found in a report recently published by the Michigan Workforce Development Agency.

[http://milmi.org/admin/uploadedPublications/1995\\_WDA\\_ManufacturingFINAL.pdf](http://milmi.org/admin/uploadedPublications/1995_WDA_ManufacturingFINAL.pdf)

We have heard a dramatic outcry from our membership in response to the deeply concerning shortage of skilled workers and we're employing a number of strategies and the local and state levels to respond. We are working to connect manufacturers with their local educators and trainers. We're arming them with resources, information and best practices for bolstering their workforce. We hosted the first state-wide Manufacturing Talent Summit and we'll be doing that again this year. We have established a Talent network so that our members have immediate access to information about opportunities and resources. We are working to educate students, parents and the broader public regarding the important role manufacturing has in our state and the great opportunities that a career in manufacturing can provide.

But if we are to renew the pipeline for manufacturing's workforce, we must address the diminishing opportunities that students have to explore manufacturing careers through CTE courses. While it is true that the state has seen a stable level of CTE enrollment, there has been a nearly 50% statewide decline in the number of students completing CTE programs since the implementation of the Michigan Merit Curriculum. There are also programs that have transitioned from 2 and 3 hour blocks to 1 hour courses, hindering the ability to impart the necessary knowledge and experience to students.

We applaud the work of the school districts that have incorporated the requirements of the MMC within rich CTE programs but the problem is that too many kids in our state do not have the opportunity to complete both CTE and MMC. For those kids that want that option and will benefit greatly from the experience and for the future of our state's largest industry, we must stop making kids choose between academic success and vocational success.

The legislation before you presents options as a practical solution to a real and present problem. It allows opportunities but in no way erodes standards other students who wish to continue along the current path. High standards and flexibility are NOT mutually exclusive concepts – CTE courses incorporate rigorous standards. Let's give kids the opportunity to choose experiential, hands-on and project-based learning.

In closing, I will say that it is rare that we see such a diverse group of supporters that these bills possess. Representatives of the business community, the agricultural community, organized labor, school boards and administrators all say that we must improve the flexibility of the Michigan Merit Curriculum. Please support HB 4465 and HB 4466.